

SPEAK UP

Here's how these employees of Rush Foundation Hospital answered the question, "If you could talk to a military person serving overseas, what would you say?"

"I appreciate what they are doing and the sacrifices they have made. I hope for a soon and safe return for all soldiers over there."

Jim Rush, director of respiratory therapy



"I appreciate what you are doing for my family and me and for this country. Be safe and hurry home!"

Rhonda Scarbrough



"There are no words to show my appreciation and gratitude for them putting their life on the line each and every day."

Susie Stegall



PHOTO BY PAULA MERRITT / THE MERIDIAN STAR

SEEING THE WORLD

Tray Achorn, standing, says being the son of a U.S. Naval officer has allowed him to experience things many people never have an opportunity to do — including moving around a lot. Tray's father, Cmdr. Frank Achorn, seated, is a dentist stationed at Naval Air Station Meridian.

Life as a Navy son

Tray Achorn is a senior at Meridian High School. His parents are Frank and Vickie Achorn, and he has a half-brother, John.

Frank Achorn is a dentist and a commander in the U.S. Navy. He is stationed at the dental clinic at Naval Air Station Meridian.

"I've enjoyed my experience as a Navy son," Tray said. His story is about life in the military, the constant moving from one duty station to another, the necessity to meet new people and adapt to new situations — but from the perspective of a teenager.

By Tray Achorn

special to The Star

My life has been an interesting one, and many of my interesting experiences come from being a "Navy son." My dad is Dr. Frank Achorn Jr., a U.S. Navy commander stationed at Naval Air Station Meridian.

Living the Navy life is a completely different lifestyle — one that only we who are actually living it can understand.

My dad has been in the Navy for more than 20 years, so I've

never known a different way of life ... but the life I live as a Navy son is one that I would never give up.

I have experienced things a lot of people will never have the opportunity to do. For example, I have lived on a Navy base.

Life on a base

I lived in base housing from third grade until sixth grade. This was quite an experience. Living on a Navy base makes one feel so much more secure, especially with all the military police around ...

One interesting thing about base housing is that all the houses are identical. This is cool because one must identify people's houses by their decorations or location, rather than their physical appearance ...

Another great thing is the big store base, known to families as the PX or the Exchange. This is a great store because it has all the basic needs and a little more. The best thing about the Exchange is that it is tax-free ... This is a great reward for being a part of a military family.

There are many great things to experience on a military base, but the best thing to me is the sense of pride and honor I get while being there. When I am on a military base, it just makes me think of all the great things our country and our troops have done in the past and present. Seeing my dad dressed in uniform makes me very proud. I am honored to be the son of a father who is in the Navy.

Lots of duty stations

Another experience that comes with being a military family is, of course, the moving. I have moved three times in my life due to the Navy re-stationing my father.

I was born in a very unique place, Guam, because my dad was stationed overseas. I was not old enough to get the full experience of living overseas, but my brother, who was 13, and got the full effect.

While Guam is a U.S. territory, it has a different atmosphere. My brother and father have told me great stories about scuba diving in the crystal clear water and

surfing. I was 2 months old when my family moved back to the United States.

We moved to a city named Summerville right outside of Charleston, S.C. This is where I was raised. It was a great place and I met many friends. I stayed here until third grade before the time to move came again.

My family did not have to move very far, but it was far enough that it was like starting a fresh life. We moved about an hour and a half away, to a place called Beaufort, S.C. This is home of the famous Paris Island military base. The military base that my family lived on was named Laurel Bay.

I had to meet new friends. However, being young, I made friends quickly and had four great years in Beaufort.

My final move

However, the dreadful news came again. My family would once again be moving. I was just about to enter high school, and I would have to start all over.

This time my family was not moving within the same state; we were moving to Meridian, Miss. When I arrived here, life was very different from that in South Carolina.

People were different, and I was once again forced to make new friends. This did not prove to be that much of a problem. We do not live on a military base, we live in public housing.

I have enjoyed living in Mississippi. Being a senior in high school, I will not be forced to move again due to the military. I feel lucky considering most military families move more often than I have done.

Moving is definitely not a fun part of being in the military, but it is part of it nonetheless. It can sometimes be a new adventure, but it's usually sad for a good period of time.

Life as a Navy son has been great ... There are many events and memories that come with this that I will not soon forget. I look forward moving on to college, but I will always remember those "Navy son" days.